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Department of Education will conduct feasibility studies of the measurement instruments used in the grant program and report the results by December 2002. They will also develop and disseminate to schools recommended student competencies for career and technical education. Many of you know my strong feelings in regard to career and technical education programs in our schools. Students not only need knowledge, but they must also know how to apply that knowledge. Today, students must possess skills ranging from academic and technical literacy, to analytical thinking, problem solving, communications, teamwork, and leadership skills. Technology has impacted all areas of our society and has influenced the way schools must prepare students to function in the twenty-first century. I'd like to share with you some history on how we got to where we are today. Last year, the Legislature passed LB 495, a bill that I introduced which created the Education and Career Preparation Task Force. Seventeen members from across the state served on that task force. They met during the interim. They made recommendations in regard to career and technical education. They did issue a report, which most of you should have received a copy. Three hearings were held throughout, one in each of the congressional districts, and this bill is actually a result of some of those recommendations by the task force. The task force adopted a mission, a vision, and goals, and also LB 486 contains two recommendations made by the task force. First, it was felt that it is important that students have an opportunity to assess both their academic achievement and their technical skills. Second, it's important that secondary schools have a curriculum framework that integrates general education standards with hands-on learning and work-based experience. I feel that this bill is a very important first step that will encourage students to stay in school, assess their knowledge in skills relative to a career theme, prepare for postsecondary opportunities and lifelong learning, and I ask for your support in regards to the committee amendment, which provides some clarification of language, added an emergency cause...clause, and reduced the fiscal note by more than one-half. I would be happy to answer any questions and urge your support of the bill. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Senator Stuhr. On the committee amendment, Senator Raikes.